Damage to Post Offices Due to Earthquakes in Kutch

774. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of post offices / sub-post offices were destroyed/ damaged due to earthquakes in the disrict of Kutch;

(b) if so, the number thereof;

(c) the number of the post offices/sub-post offices out of above which have been got repaired/ reconstructed and started normal functioning; and

(d) by when the remaining post offices/sub-post offices are likely to be repaired/reconstructed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNCATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) And (b) Sir, 45 out of 67 Post Offices buildings — 13 departmental and 32 rented buildings — were damaged due to earthquakes in the district of Kutch.

(c) and (d) Repair work of departmental buildings was taken up in phased manner till date, out of 13 departmental buildings, 10 buildings have been repaired completely, one is under repair and pre- fabricated structures have been provided in respect of 2 Post Offices. Repairs to rented buildigs are to be unertaken by landlords. However, out of 32 damaged rented builidngs, the department has provided pre-fabricated structures in respect of 8 badly damaged buildings. Normal postal services have been restored in the earthquake-affected Kutch district.

Reduction in STD rates

775. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact the Government have reduced the rates of STD by around 60 per cent on 14th January, 2002 and whether this has improved the tariff and revenue in the telecom sector in many manner;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are monitoring the fastest growing telecom markets in the world to be in the league with them; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Although the traffic has increased by about 25 percent after the reduction in STD rates, there has been a decrease by about 20 percent in the long distance metered call units as per sample study conducted in the month of February, 2002. The long distance metered call units are expected to increase in the coming months with the change in the subscribes calling habits. It is too early to assess the effects of reduction in rates of STD on the revenue in the telecom sector.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The telecom sector has been opened up for private sector participation to bring competition in this sector. This will result into better quality service at competitive rates as well as faster growth in the telecom sector.

New post offices in Arunachal Pradesh

776. SHRI NABAM REBIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the locations in Arunachal Pradesh where new post offices are proposed to be opened during the year 2001-2002; and

(b) if so, by when all the villages are likely to be provided with post offices in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) There was a proposal to open new post office at Yupia in Papumpara District of Arunachal Pradesh during the year 2001-2002 and a Branch post office has been opened there.

(b) All the villages in the State are provided with postal facilities as far as daily delivery of mails and sale of stamps and stationary is concerned. However, the opening of new post offices is subject to the fulfillment of prescribed norms and availability of required resources.